



August 30, 2012

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W., TW-A325  
Washington, D.C. 20554

*Re: Docket No. 96-128*

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On August 23rd, a delegation of organizations from the California Bay Area met with the Deputy District Director of Congresswoman Barbara Lee to discuss the high cost of receiving a phone call from a prison, jail or detention center. Member-organizations of the delegation included the Center for Media Justice, Media Alliance, The Utility Reform Network (TURN) and Ella Baker Center. The delegation is petitioning the Congresswoman to ask the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to address the high cost of prison phone calls by passing the Wright Petition.

Tracey Rosenberg of [Media Alliance](#) spoke about the high rates of phone calls- a typical interstate collect call from a prison has a \$3.95 connection fee (regardless of the length of the call), while rates per minute can be as high as \$0.89 per minute. Mark Toney of [The Utility Reform Network](#) (TURN) spoke about the other implications of current call rates, which are forcing families to choose between speaking with their family or paying for necessities like groceries and other bills.

Sandra Johnson from Ella Baker Center who works on the [Books Not Bars campaign](#) talked about her struggles as a mother in prison, trying to take care of her family and look after her daughter. Studies show that for the nearly three million children in the United States with one or both parents incarcerated, hearing the voices of their parents can often make the difference between a child feeling loved – even while enduring incarceration- or feeling totally abandoned. Staying connected also increases the chances a person leaving prison will successfully reintegrate back into society.

California currently is one of only eight states that have banned these kickbacks. However, the lack of regulation on the federal level means that residents of California calling out of the state continue to spend hundreds of dollars a month to stay connected to their loved ones in prisons and detention centers.

These groups believe that the FCC--as the only agency with jurisdiction over long distance rates--is the correct venue to resolve this problem. On behalf of these groups we request federal oversight of interstate Prison phone call rates.

Respectfully submitted,

amalia deloney  
Associate Director